

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Area Hospitals Announce Collective Visiting Policy Change for Children as precaution against spread of flu

2009 H1N1 flu virus continues to spread across nation and within region

October 14, 2009— In an effort to protect hospital patients from the spread of 2009 H1N1 and seasonal flu, **effective Thursday, October 15, 2009, no one under the age of 18 will be permitted in Hampton Roads area hospitals unless they are patients.** This visitation policy change includes siblings of newborns in Women's and Infant's units.



This age restriction reflects the higher prevalence of 2009 H1N1 among children and adolescents, putting them at greater risk of carrying the virus into health care settings. Medical evidence suggests infected persons can transmit the virus as much as 24 hours before displaying symptoms.

"I applaud this regional approach to community safety and infection prevention," says State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, MD, MBA. "Every Virginian wants to maximize safety for hospitalized patients," she continues.

Our goal as health care providers is to use every available and appropriate measure to protect our patients from exposure to outside infections. This visitation change comes at a time when the 2009 H1N1 virus is already spreading and before seasonal flu typically appears in our region.

In the shared interest of patient safety, 18 area hospitals have proactively put these visitation measures into place. They apply only to visitors, not to those seeking medical care.

Additionally, individuals displaying symptoms of influenza-like illness should not visit area hospitals. Symptoms of flu include: fever and respiratory illness such as cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, chills, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.

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This visiting policy change will remain in effect during the flu season and while prevalence of flu in the region is extraordinarily high.

Participating hospitals include:

Bon Secours DePaul Medical Center
Bon Secours Mary Immaculate Hospital
Bon Secours Maryview Medical Center
Chesapeake Regional Medical Center
Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters
Naval Medical Center Portsmouth
Riverside Regional Medical Center
Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital
Riverside Tappahannock Hospital
Riverside Walter Reed Hospital
Sentara Norfolk General Hospital
Sentara Bayside Hospital
Sentara CarePlex Hospital
Sentara Heart Hospital
Sentara Leigh Hospital
Sentara Obici Hospital
Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital
Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center

Hospital leaders understand the inconvenience this policy change may cause area families. However, they ask the community to understand the need to control the spread of flu to patients and to partner with these institutions for the good of public health.

Limited exceptions may be made for expectant and new fathers under the age of 18 and, for example, instances involving patients at the end of life. Exceptions would be allowed at the discretion of the attending physician and hospital leadership.

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